

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKKA #0921 2670948
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 240948Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9479

UNCLAS DHAKA 000921

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO PEACE CORPS FROM AMBASSADOR MORIARTY TO PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AARON WILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: BRING THE PEACE CORPS BACK TO BANGLADESH

REF: DHAKA 735

SUMMARY

¶1. Director Williams, congratulations on taking the helm at Peace Corps, the pre-eminent people-to-people nexus of the United States. I strongly believe the time is right to re-open the Peace Corps program in Bangladesh. By returning Peace Corps Volunteers to Bangladesh, the world's fourth most populous Muslim nation, we can best follow through on the President's call in Cairo for greater U.S. engagement with the Muslim world. Through developing personal ties with the people of Bangladesh, Peace Corps Volunteers can leverage our existing, broad-based development programs, particularly in the areas of education and community development. Since the Peace Corps closed its Bangladesh program in 2006 for prudent security reasons, we have further strengthened our bilateral relationship. The security environment in Bangladesh has dramatically improved, and the government has made significant strides in its commitment and ability to guarantee the security of USG personnel in the field.

ENGAGING THE MUSLIM WORLD

¶2. From the Prime Minister on down, Bangladeshis enthusiastically applauded the President's Cairo speech and his commitment to reaching out to the Muslim World. I am confident Bangladesh would welcome back the Peace Corps with equal enthusiasm. By living and working with local communities, Peace Corps Volunteers could help to build individual personal connections and broader organic relationships between the people of Bangladesh and the United States. Their work could help us underscore our common values and strong support for grassroots development in Bangladesh. In addition, by sharing their experiences in Bangladesh, returned volunteers could help to improve U.S. understanding of Bangladesh and South Asia more broadly.

ADVANCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GOALS

¶3. Bangladesh has earned a reputation for developing cutting-edge grassroots development programs through world-renowned philanthropic organizations such as Grameen Bank. Peace Corps Volunteers could leverage existing development programs to help communities improve health, education, English-language skills and economic opportunity. The United States' mission in Bangladesh is to help strengthen democracy, promote development and deny space to terrorists. In the coming months, we also expect to focus increasingly on an agenda including food security, climate change and women's empowerment. Peace Corps Volunteers could make vital contributions on all these issues through their work and personal example.

THE TIME IS RIGHT TO RETURN

¶4. Three years after Peace Corps closed its program in Bangladesh, we have a much stronger bilateral relationship. U.S.-Bangladesh security cooperation has increased and expanded, making conditions ripe for Peace Corps' return; country team agrees that the security situation has improved substantially to allow for the return of Peace Corps. We supported Bangladesh in its successful transition to democratic government through 2008 elections. The new government enjoys a strong mandate and has shown by word and deed that it is implacably opposed to activities and individuals that threaten local or global security. This is a promising time for Bangladesh. I strongly encourage you to seize this opportunity to reopen Peace Corps in Bangladesh.

MORIARTY